

to the speculative price of land. And as he helped in this way to promote land speculation, so in equal degree he is responsible for the present unemployment that is its necessary consequence. His schemes of reconstruction all lie in pieces at his feet. In no case can the failure be attributed to causes connected with external trade or foreign rates of exchange or the desolation in Europe. The failure must be attributed alone to the effects of the speculation in land which sent up the price of land beyond the amount that labour and capital could pay. There is no other explanation than this for the £10,000,000 a year loss on the 200,000 houses, which forced the Government itself to cancel contracts and call a halt to the extravagance. There is no other explanation for the inability to satisfy the tens of thousands of applicants for land who wait in vain for the promised small holdings. There is no other explanation for the present plight of the farmers, who to avoid eviction during the boom, bought their farms from their landlords. The land boom has been followed by the inevitable depression. The prices of commodities have fallen for reasons that need not be discussed here; but they have fallen. The rent of land has not fallen to the same degree. If it had, there should be no greater disability for labour and capital to produce goods or grow crops than there was in the time of the boom. The holding of land out of use in the attempt to maintain its monopoly price is the manifest cause of the stoppage of production that has thrown 2,000,000 people out of employment and kept them there.

Truly, in the present circumstances, as Sir Alfred Mond told the House of Commons on the 13th March, "the demand for houses is not the same as it was." The getting of a house and the building of new houses has been made an impossibility. The same is true of anything and everything. The growth of poverty has curtailed the demand for boots and shoes, for shirts and stockings, for food and clothing, for all commodities of general use. The greatest market for British products, with an unlimited demand from potential consumers, is in Britain itself; but we are told to look abroad for some extraneous reason for the stagnation and starvation in our midst.

Free trade with all the nations, and the opportunity to produce for and buy from the world's markets are things earnestly to be desired, and if the Genoa Conference does something in that direction, it will do a great work. But the reduction, or even the complete removal of the Customs barriers between different countries cannot in itself cure unemployment nor raise wages. Freedom of exchange is an instrument that enables labour and capital to produce with the greatest efficiency and with the least expense all the goods that are wanted for consumption, just as the farmer produces corn so that he may have clothes, or the manufacturer makes ploughs so that he may have food. Freedom of exchange cannot make trade nor create wealth where the buyer and seller are not free to produce.

The Taxation of Land Values, which is the ready instrument to cut through the monopoly of land everywhere, is what is wanted, and it is incumbent on our people at home and abroad to do their very utmost to develop public opinion for this essential reform.

A. W. M.

THE WAR PROBLEM IN A NEW LIGHT

With few reservations we pronounce Mr. John E. Grant's "The Problem of War and its Solution"* an excellent book. Its conclusions will commend themselves to all who have caught sight of the fundamental truth that gives meaning and value to the word Democracy. Its survey of human affairs extends from the beginnings of historic times to the passing day; from the influence of heredity and the origin of language to the psychology of war in its most recent manifestations. It deals sympathetically though critically with Darwinism and the Evolutionists, and incidentally conveys much valuable information on matters of pure physical science. At the appropriate point the author leaves the field of Cosmology and Physics and diverges along that line of thought which most interests the world at this critical moment of its history—the science of Man in society. There, he encounters the numerous superstitions that have obstructed the development of the human understanding since civilization began—original sin, the struggle for existence, the Malthusian doctrine, the unchangeability of human nature. With all those subjective and brain-spun theories that have woven themselves into a compact body of belief with a delusive appearance of objective reality and which have constituted what Spencer called a "super-organic environment" to the race mind, Mr. Grant wrestles valiantly. And thus he arrives by successive stages at his arguments upon "the origin of evil," "the secret of history," "the psychology of captivity," and, finally, "the rule of the land" in the payment to the Commonwealth of the value of special privileges enjoyed, as being the rational regulative principle of human living-together, as the rule of the road is for vehicle drivers, or the rule of the sea for the right regulation of navigation.

Among the original conceptions which enrich this book (if, out of the constant flux and interchange of thought, there ever emerges an entirely original idea) one must note the arguments from the laws of crystallization with which the author meets the Malthusian theory of the tendency of life to outgrow subsistence. "A crystal in its enviroing solution will not grow unless the solution is in a super-saturated condition—when the solution is reduced to the condition of saturation (or equilibrium) no further crystallization takes place. Crystals are not "born" when they are not wanted, and a condition of "overpopulation" of crystals, *unless the enviroing solution is interfered with*, is a physical impossibility." The application of this argument on the higher planes of evolution is lucidly set forth in propositions which we may attempt to epitomize as follows:—Inorganic matter constitutes the "solution" out of which, when "super" saturated with the chemical elements needed for plant life, plants will come to birth and multiply, until—and only until—the "super" supply of the nutritious element is reduced to equilibrium. Vegetable life constitutes the "solution" out of which animal life is born for as long as there is a "super" abundance in it of the elements necessary for animal subsistence, but in which no more animal life will appear when these elements are reduced to the balancing point. With the aid of a quotation from Haeckel the author also argues that as the limit of individual size is determined for each species by two factors, the inner constitution of the plasm and its dependence upon outer environment, there is every reason to believe that the ultimate volume of animal life that may come to birth and live healthily is determined beforehand by the same natural and painless principle of limitation, and that the Malthusian terror of over multiplication is as unreasonable as the assumption that the rate of growth in an infant would be maintained indefinitely through life. We are thus brought, even at this point, within sight of the need for abandoning the old hypothesis

*"The Problem of War and its Solution." By J. E. Grant. Geo. Allen & Unwin, London. Price 12s. 6d. net.

of a struggle for existence in a hostile environment and substituting therefor that of an impulse towards livingness,—an *élan vitale*—a constant effort at adaptation, in a neutral environment. But when we rise to the plane of Man in society, not only may we reasonably assume the original self-regulative law as being still in operation, but we reach for the first time a point where the organism has a practically unlimited power of modifying its "environmenting solution", i.e., of maintaining the solution's supersaturation with the means of subsistence. The hypothesis then, that there is in the original constitution of things, a principle whereby life on all planes and both as to quantity and quality, is adjusted *a priori* rather than *a posteriori* to the means of subsistence and which therefore precludes any necessity for preventive checks against undue increase, is not only infinitely more soul-satisfying but it is shown to be more in accordance with right reason. Unless the Malthusian theory is endowed with unquenchable vitality it can hardly survive the knock-out blow it here receives.

Mr. Grant conceives that the key to the problem of the origin of war is to be found in the natural fact that "animals in the abnormal condition of captivity act in direct contradiction to the whole tenor of their lives". In turning against a distressed comrade, the herd of cattle oppose themselves to the law of their being, to the whole system of instincts and habits which have made it possible for them to live together, or even to exist at all. Within the hostile environment of the "overpopulated" corral the cattle are "living dangerously." They seek to preserve themselves by destroying each other, motivated by the aberration of the instinct of self-preservation." Translated into terms of human society, this means that Man, like the imprisoned animals, finds himself unhappy, and not having realized his captivity as the cause of his misery, he turns viciously against his fellows,—his employers, his fellow-workers, his governors,—and more fiercely still against other groups of unfamiliar appearance and differing habits.

Here we may lay hold of the thought that seems to underlie all that follows in the remaining half of this remarkable book. Man, who was born to be a gentleman, who is acutely conscious of the Categorical Imperative within him binding him to the performance of duty, and all of whose natural impulses are (*pace* the Theologians) towards the things that are true and honest and lovely and of good report, made an error of judgment on his first attempt at civilized life, and marched straight into captivity. His captor was a superstition, an erroneous belief,—the assumption that the natural resources of the earth, the land and its opportunities, can be legitimately or righteously owned, bought or sold. He thus acquiesced in that captivity of restricted opportunity which has broken his temper, perverted his natural instincts, distorted his vision and twisted his entire character and kept him "living dangerously" ever since; which has indeed even reacted upon his intelligence and made him misapprehend the causes of his own moral obliquity and reduced him to the condition of a whipped cur. It is the acquiescence in this captivity that has produced the state of mind that found expression recently in the words of one of the most highly honoured (British, not Prussian) moral philosophers; "The State has a right to compel, provided it stands for its own welfare. It owns us, we belong to it. We derive the very substance of our souls from the organized community in which we live, and which we call the State."

If we accept, as the present reviewer willingly does, Mr. Grant's simple and intelligible theory of the beginnings of the civilizations that have culminated in the social conditions of to-day, and if we can entertain the thought that the now discredited legend of The fall of Man may find its basis of fact in this error into which primitive Man blundered with the pardonable thoughtlessness of inexperience, it will take little effort of imagination

to envisage the havoc this must play with the cherished dogmas of the past, political and ecclesiastical. For, like the new theory of relativity which threatens the stability of Euclid's axioms and Newton's principles, this obvious explanation of "what's wrong with the world" will not only deflate many windy abstractions, but will reduce much philosophy and political theorizing to a pathetic futility. But when we realize the extraordinary fecundity of erroneous belief we shall not feel surprised that this initial error in sociology has become the parent of a numerous progeny, and has kept the moral philosophers of the world so full of employment that the cause of Man's sins and miseries has been sought for in every possible direction but the right one. It is hardly possible to estimate rightly the revolutionary effect upon our accepted modes of thought that must result from such a change of base. For if captivity is found to be the cause of our moral turpitude and propensity to war, then obviously, freedom is, as Mr. Grant affirms, the only remedy. If Man is by nature a peace-loving and friendly creature, then, again obviously, he only requires the liberation from irritating restraints to manifest his true character. "The spiritual evolution of Man" writes our author "is only possible in freedom."

The exigencies of space forbid more than mention of the chapters on "The slavery of monopolies", "Usury and the Great Bubble", and "Practical Politics." Suffice it to say that the interest is maintained to the end, and that the book may be commended not only to Single taxers but to all who have succeeded in retaining open minds and who sincerely desire a solution of the devil's puzzle presented by the world of to-day. For the sake of these latter readers who may yet lack the vision and sympathy that brings understanding, we could wish the book were beyond criticism on its purely literary side. It seems to lack something of that rhythmic flow of thought which comes so mysteriously to the aid of argument, and which indeed possesses a convincing power peculiarly its own. Valuable ideas are juxtaposed with insufficient consideration to their organic unity or affinity, and an occasional platitude slips in which the reader's artistic sense suggests would be better left out. Again, on pp. 348 to 352 the picture of "the effect of the change" to freedom, is perhaps too highly coloured in view of the appeal we should wish it to make to the gentile world. Those who know the open secret of Man's abject failure to fulfil the end of his being, are aware that it has not yet entered into the heart of the race to conceive the exquisite quality of the social life that now simply awaits our escape from captivity; but it is well to remember the wise caution of Him who admonished even his believing followers, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." The incredulity and unimaginativeness of average humanity must be taken account of. We take leave of Mr. Grant's book with regret at having reached its end, and with gratitude to its author for having given it to the world.

ALEX. MACKENDRICK.

"A telegram from Warsaw" (according to Reuter's WEEKLY TRADE REVIEW, 10th March, 1922) "says that all import duties on food, clothing and shoes have been suspended for a period of six weeks, in order to reduce the cost of living." But, if that is the result of suspending the import duties, why only for six weeks?

Never before had so many limited companies come to a sad end. Last year nearly 2,700 companies were wound up voluntarily, and some 1,200 companies, too feeble to bestir themselves, were dissolved by the Registrar of Companies as defunct companies.—Mr. Herbert W. Jordan in a lecture to the Secretaries' Association, Ltd., MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, 2nd March.